

**Montgomery County Council Public Hearing – March 7, 2006**

**AGAINST: Special Appropriation for Kendale School**  
**FOR: Councilmember Denis Budget Amendment to build new school on current Seven Locks site**  
**FOR: Strong implementation of the findings and recommendations in the Inspector General's "Seven Locks School Projects" Report**

Good evening, President Leventhal and Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to comment tonight.

My name is Linda Guest. I live in the Riverhill townhouse community located at Seven Locks and River Roads in Bethesda. Our community has few children and does not border either of the school sites. Nonetheless, we have worked with the Seven Locks coalition for the last two years due to concern about the community impact of the abrupt change of plan for Seven Locks Elementary.

This evening I am speaking as an individual. I am actually one of a much broader base of roughly 75 percent<sup>1</sup> of the County who do not have children in the Montgomery County Public School System. We value education and have an interest as major contributors to the school system's \$1.7 billion operating budget plus capital expenditures.

More importantly, each of us has an interest in accountability of every government agency. Good government requires transparency and access to information. We thank the Inspector General and his staff for their report, as well as the Council for their support, and encourage the Council to follow up on the findings contained in the IG Report.

Regarding the "replacement" school on Kendale Road, as much as I have tried to see all sides of that plan, it is like trying to put a square peg into a round hole. It makes no sense. As summarized so well by Callum Murray, Community Planning Leader at the Department of Park and Planning: "*The other major group of issues centers around the suitability of the Kendale Road site, its small size, environmental challenges, loss of forest, potential to increase flooding, necessity to widen Kendale Road, lack of sidewalks, shortage of parking, and reduction in recreational space. Many of these points have validity as the Kendale school site was acquired in an age when elementary schools with up to 740 students were never contemplated.*"<sup>ii</sup>

To spend millions of dollars on a facility of the wrong size in the wrong place would create a visible legacy and monument to bad planning for the next 50 years. I, therefore, urge the Council to reject the School Board request for the Kendale project.

On the other hand, I urge you to approve the Budget Amendment to build a new school on the current Seven Locks site. It could open by 2008. It could be the same compact two-story structure, recommended by the MCPS architect and approved by the Seven

Locks PTA in 2001, a design that leaves the wonderful recreation area valued by the entire community. This could be the living legacy of this Council – a monument to community-based planning and wise use of taxpayer money that we would all applaud!

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Mrs. Prasner, May 13, 2004, County Council Worksession for FY 05 Operating Budget MCPS.

<sup>ii</sup> MNCPPC Memorandum-Mandatory Referral, dated 4/29/05 for agenda Items #4 and #5, Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for Mandatory Referral No. 05401-MCPS-1 and Mandatory Referral No. 05402-MCPS-1: Seven Locks Elementary School (Replacement), page 4.